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THE ASIANADIAN

AN ASIAN CANADIAN MAGAZINE



(on a farm somewhere in British Columbia, circa 1930)

Contents

Features

SOME STAYED ON... 4
MYLER WILKINSON

FROM BRIXTON TO BRAZIL... 7
RICHARD FUNG

NO NAME CHINA JACKS 11
ANTHONY B. CHAN

MEMOIRS OF A
CHINESE SCHOOL DROP-OUT 21
KEVIN WAN

A MINORITY WITHIN 23
A MINORITY
SURINDER SINGH GILL

Departments

EDITORIAL 1

ON THE FIRING LINE 10

POETRY 16

FACE TO FACE 17

REVIEW 27

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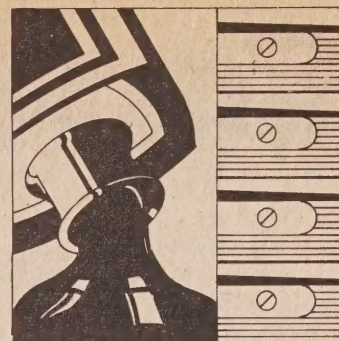
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collective.

Editorial



The fact that *The Asianadian* is still around, four years after its birth, is something short of a miracle--considering our admittedly limited readership, fraying shoestring budget and burnt-out, volunteer staff. All around us in the past few years progressive Canadian and American periodicals (e.g. *Branching Out*, *Makara*, *The San Francisco Journal*) have been forced to suspend publication due to a lack of funds. Yet the foolhardy individuals involved in *The Asianadian* have somehow managed to maintain an insane tenacity which, so far, has prevented the magazine from fading out completely.

Regular readers of *The Asianadian* have undoubtedly noticed a marked decline in the quality of the magazine over the past year and a half. The shift to sporadic publication dates and bland newsprint is clearly symptomatic of a growing, nation wide economic and psychological miasma which seems to be beyond our control. The deteriorating quality of the magazine is frustrating and regrettable, but we really have no other choice. In meeting after meeting we have thrashed out the question of *The Asianadian* future. We have considered folding up completely. We have considered going into hibernation for a year. Ultimately, however, we have always voted unanimously to trudge onward, despite the huge pitfalls.

Looking back on the past four years, veteran members of the collective can readily pinpoint the many errors and stumbling blocks encountered along the way--the inevitable structural problems; our occasional lack of foresight regarding expenditures; haphazard efforts at promoting the magazine; power imbalances --and the inadvertent bruising of egos and the alienation of potential contributors through misunderstandings and our earlier self-righteous attitude. Yes, negative self-criticism can be enlightening and fortifying. But too much of it can be debilitating and self-defeating. At this point in the magazine's history it is more useful for us to focus on our achievements over the past four years, so that we can perhaps forge ahead with renewed hope and creative energy.

ASIANADIAN AIMS

- 1) To find new dignity and pride in being Asian in Canada.
- 2) To promote an understanding between Asian Canadians and other Canadians.
- 3) To speak out against those conditions, individuals and institutions perpetuating racism in Canada.
- 4) To stand up against the distortions of our history in Canada, stereotypes, economic exploitations, and the general tendency towards injustice and inequality practised on minority groups.
- 5) To provide a forum for Asian Canadian writers, artists, musicians, etc.
- 6) To promote unity by bridging the gap between Asians with roots in Canada and recent immigrants.

In April, 1978, a small group of young, idealistic Asian Canadians, united by the above goals, registered a non-profit, charitable organization called "The Asianadian Resource Workshop". Largely inspired by the progressive Asian American movement which flourished on American university campuses during the late 60s and early 70s, this loosely formed group set out to nurture the development of a similar sense of cultural identity and political consciousness. And they saw as their primary vehicle a quarterly magazine which would give Asian Canadians a chance to speak for themselves. For the first time in Canadian history, individuals with ancestral roots in China, India, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Pakistan, Kampuchea, Korea, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines were invited to share their thoughts and feelings in a free forum devoted exclusively to them. As Tony Chan, one of the founders of *The Asianadian*, put it four years ago:

The concept of the Asianadian person is a new one in much the same way as the Asianadian culture. It transcends specific ethnic affiliations such as "being Chinese" or "being East Indian". It also transcends Asian racism, class lines--and the Asian traditions of sexism, militarism and regionalism... To find a new meaning in being Asian in Canada through becoming an Asianadian, however, must come from 1.) recognizing our historical and cultural roots in Asia and Canada, and 2.) brid-

ging the gap between Asians of different cultures. Recent immigrants must learn the Western side from those already here. Those already here must learn the Asian side from those recently arrived. Personalism must be overcome. Unity is the only recourse to survival.

The publication of a magazine was indeed a bold and exciting venture into the unknown. When I drifted into the collective on a whim in the summer of 1978 I was fortunate enough to witness the exhilarating burst of crazy energy and sense of community and solidarity which launched this dream called *The Asianadian*. After two or three meetings I too was infected with the "Asianadian fever"--and, as a result, I found myself committed to editing the issue on Asianadian women.

For the first few years of my involvement I watched the magazine blossom into something really remarkable. Several members of the collective dropped out along the way, but at the same time, several more joined us, offering fresh ideas and new contacts to tap. By the autumn of 1979 we had amassed almost 300 subscribers from all over the world. Some of our articles were being reprinted in other periodicals. High schools were inviting us to speak to students about Asianadian history. *The Globe and Mail* called us up for a front page "Quote of the Day". Our little post office box was packed with letters, subscription orders and press releases every week. By the spring of 1980 we had clearly established the magazine as a respected, progressive Asian Canadian voice.

The first few years provided an enriching albeit frustrating experience for all those actively involved. The rotation of duties. Collective decision making. Inventing new pseudonyms. Searching through ancient family albums at the last minute for photographic fillers. Emotionally draining, marathon meetings. All-night lay-out sessions in each other's kitchen or living room. The spontaneous exchange of ideas in endless telephone conversations. These are some of the more positive memories which I have of *The Asianadian* past. In general, we developed a supportive network through our grassroots, almost masochistic commitment to this magazine. It sounds trite, but it's true. For many of us, it was a kind of 'personal growth' experience, not only in terms of heightening political awareness and reshaping our cultural identities, but also in terms of developing our technical and communication skills. As relative novices in the field of periodical publishing, I think we managed to put out a fairly im-

pressive product. It was almost like giving birth to a baby, as we carried each issue from the point of germinating ideas for possible articles--to writing, editing and typing the articles--to design and lay-out, illustration, folding, stapling and finally distribution. It should also be noted here that the common goals of the Asianadian Resource Workshop were sufficiently strong to transcend any political differences which may have existed between individual collective members. Those who have come and gone over the past four years ranged from what some people might label 'Marxists', to 'social democrats', to 'wishy-washy liberals'. This political diversity has indeed proven to be a strength, as it has provided the dynamics necessary for growth.

Having been involved in *The Asianadian* during the earlier optimistic stages, I am really saddened by its present state. One could write a book analyzing what went wrong. Why didn't *The Asianadian* become a household word, especially among the masses of Asian Canadians scattered across this country? There is no easy answer to this question. It can be partly attributed to language barriers. It can be partly attributed to the racism and ethnocentrism which invariably exists to some extent in most Asian communities--the ghettoized mentality which keeps Asian Canadians divided from one another. Or perhaps our timing was off. If only the original members had accidentally met a decade earlier, during the less apathetic days of student revolts, may be the magazine could have created a stronger impact on young Asian Canadians and established itself more securely....In any case, it must be admitted that our present readership is largely comprised of the already converted--the already politicized. Unfortunately, many potential readers and contributors have perceived the magazine as "too radical and one-sided", and have thus refused to associate themselves with it. In an attempt to counter such accusations, we have made a point of presenting a more balanced view by including opinions from 'the other side' (e.g. this issue's "Face to Face"). Some people have suggested that we go even further by totally erasing our anger and including more popular, safe items such as family recipes and fashion shows. We have been warned that we will never widen our readership and get those coveted government grants as long as we continue to shake up the status quo. But, shaking up the status quo is implicit in our goals. I am afraid that by toning down our anger we would be compromising ourselves out of existence. The unfortunate reality is that *The Asianadian* represents a small, shrinking minority drawn from several larger minorities--i.e. progressive Asian Canadians. The future of the magazine appears to be contingent, not only on harnessing the human energy and funds, but also on major changes in the currently stagnant political

climate--and in the generally complacent, apolitical minds of Canadians as a whole.

The need for an alternate, distinctly Asian Canadian medium is undeniable. When the massacres of countless peasants in El Salvador and the loss of 3,000 lives in a flood in China are hidden away in the back pages of major newspapers to make room for full, front page coverage of the Royal Wedding, there is definitely something horrifyingly wrong here.

In the past four years, *The Asianadian* has attempted to provide a thought-provoking and accurate picture of the past, present and future. The magazine has made a minute but visible mark on Asian Canadian history, bringing together, for the first time, the thoughts, feelings and artistic works of individuals from a wide spectrum of Asian Canadian communities. We have touched on sensitive and previously ignored issues and exposed to all Canadians chapters of this nation's history which do not exist in school textbooks. Since we have come

this far, with over a dozen issues behind us, we cannot give up the ongoing struggle to raise consciousness levels. Racism, like sexism and imperialism, will probably be around forever, as it is unlikely that human beings will ever lose their desire to exert power over other human beings. *The Asianadian* will never come close to attaining the lofty goals set by the original collective members. Nevertheless, the struggle is a meaningful one. If a single poem or article in the magazine can cause even two or three people to really think about the problem of racism, or examine their place in this vertical Canadian mosaic, then we will have accomplished something worthwhile.

- MOMOYE SUGIMAN

(alias Ami Chiyo Hori
alias Dawn Kiyoye Ono)

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Are you planning to move soon? If so, please let us know your new address so that you can continue receiving THE ASIANADIAN, and we can avoid wasting copies.

Some Stayed On: the Japanese of Greenwood

BY MYLER WILKINSON

A weathered sign at the west entrance to Greenwood boasts that this tiny community in British Columbia's West Kootenay is the smallest incorporated city in Canada. Each Labour Day weekend for as long as the people here can remember a parade has been staged down the main street of the town. It is like parades in small towns everywhere--floats decorated by service groups, police sirens, the local Queen and her princesses, someone throwing peanuts and candies to the children; bicycles and dogs and politicians waving. The whole procession takes less than ten minutes to pass. There is just one thing out of the ordinary about all this which even a casual observer might notice. Many of the faces in the crowd and in the parade have oriental features. Of the 1,000 people who live in Greenwood in 1981 approximately one-third are of Japanese ancestry. How they came to be here is not a story most Canadians remember with any pride. It is a story whose main elements include global war, misplaced nationalism, outright racism and greed.

It is December, 1941. Pearl Harbour has just been bombed and feelings against the 22,000 people of Japanese ancestry on British Columbia's coast run high. Government plans are underway which will lead, within a few months, to the evacuation of all "enemy aliens" from within a 100 mile limit of the West Coast. At least 16,000 of the Japanese people who fall into this category are Canadian citizens, either by birth or naturalization. Already some of them are selling their property and withdrawing savings from banks.

In Greenwood more than three-quarters of the buildings on the main street are empty and the wind flaps through broken windows of abandoned homes. Two hundred people, those who stayed on after the copper smelter and Granby mine closed down 20 years earlier, are living here in relative isolation 350 miles due east of Vancouver. Greenwood is known as a 'ghost town' to everyone except its residents.

In late February, 1942 orders-in-council issued under the authority of the War Measures Act spell out the future for Japanese Canadians in British Columbia. Within weeks they are evicted from their homes. Boats and cars are impounded and

personal property is confiscated. About 20,000 people of Japanese ancestry are processed through Hastings Park in East Vancouver within a short time and then sent out on road building crews in the Interior; to work in agricultural camps on the Prairies--and most importantly to the fortunes of Greenwood and other detention centres which were created in isolated areas of British Columbia's Interior. Twelve thousand evacuees eventually found their way to the five camps in the Kootenay region, plus one more near Hope. Later they would receive official correspondence informing them that the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property had sold their houses and boats and lands in their absence. There was much bitterness. These people had been forcibly separated from their property and their families had been broken up. Any future payment in cash could never be enough. The people of Greenwood read about these events in their newspapers and they listened on their radios. For the most part they believed, like everyone else, what they were told. These Japanese nationals and Japanese Canadians were "threats to national security" and had to be placed under detention for the duration of the war.

The Mayor of Greenwood, W.E. McArthur, a man of some vision, was aware of the need for detention centres for the evacuees. He was also painfully aware of the empty buildings on the main street of his town and of a diminishing tax roll. On April 1, 1942 a public meeting was called in Greenwood to discuss the matter of the Japanese. All but six of the 48 citizens who attended voted to receive the evacuees. At the same time, a petition was circulated in the Okanagan that flatly stated no Japanese were wanted. In nearby Grand Forks, vehement editorials were run in the *Grand Forks Sun*, (now defunct), slandering the Japanese race. There are several arguments put forth to explain why the people of Greenwood decided to accept the Japanese into their community. Of these the most obvious is economic. The Japanese were expected to purchase goods, pay rent and eat, much like anyone else. There is also the historical background of

Greenwood. The town existed because of minerals in the earth and through the early years of this century it accepted peoples of many races and ethnic origins to work in the mines. Dominant cliques and nationalities had a more difficult time forming here than in some other Interior communities. It is also possible that a certain amount of government pressure was brought to bear on the final decision, although documents to support this are not readily available. Whatever their ultimate reasons, the people of Greenwood accepted the Japanese--something few other towns in the province were prepared to do.

Greenwood was not the largest detention camp--at its peak it would house just over 1,200 Japanese. By October, 1942 there were over 4,800 evacuees in the Slo-can Valley and New Denver had absorbed 1,700 more. But of all the Interior camps, with the possible exception of New Denver, Greenwood was to be the most profoundly influenced by the changes that would over-take it. Unlike other camps, such as Sandon and Tashme, and the settlements in the Slo-can Valley, Greenwood was an operating town with most of the facilities that make up a living community. Alongside this fact were the empty buildings themselves--less than a handful were still in use. The remainder, including at least two hotels, were boarded up but still structurally sound. This vacuum could be filled by the Japanese without crowding other residents. In succeeding years a developing wood industry began to provide jobs, but this was in the future. In the spring of 1942 the 200 inhabitants of Greenwood were faced with living with the 1,200 Japanese who appeared in their midst. The sleepy community would see its population increased six-fold within the space of a few weeks. The resettlement was viewed as temporary and few people predicted a lasting integration of the two cultures. Thirty-nine years after the fact the numbers of Japanese Canadians still in the community point to radically different conclusions.

By mid-April, 1942 work crews with the the B.C. Security Commission, the body responsible for relocating the Japanese, had begun to make long abandoned homes and hotels in Greenwood habitable. There was no luxury. Double-wide wooden bunkbeds filled two and sometimes three walls of each hotel room. Entire families lived in one room and shared communal cooking facilities. There was water, but it was all cold--as was the first winter the Japanese spent in such poorly heated accommodations.

A woman who witnessed the arrival of the Japanese in Greenwood tried to put the feelings of that time into perspective: "It is difficult to look back and see a thing in the context of those years. There was an all-out war effort, patriotism was running high...people believed more of what they were told."



The Fukui family provides a special sort of transport during 1964 Labour Day festivities.

There was little public protest when the trainloads of Japanese began moving out of Vancouver for their destinations in the heart of the province. While they could move with relative freedom inside the camps, and were paid, even if poorly, for their work, the occupants of places such as Greenwood could not fool themselves--they were under detention awaiting the next government decision on their fate.

Within a few weeks of the arrival of the work crews, rudimentary improvements in Greenwood were completed. Each dwelling was marked with a large white number and the evacuees were assigned to specific buildings. The present Traveller's Cafe on the main street, then the Pacific Hotel, was marked with a #1. A young girl at that time, Betty Kohn, remembers how it was that the community waited for the first train load of Japanese: "It was a spring day in April when they came. We had never seen Japanese before. I will never forget standing at the station and watching the babies being passed out the train windows...I was 15 years old and I did not think of the political implications of what I saw. Discussion of the Japanese had absorbed our community for weeks; the feeling was that there was a place for them here... We had been brought up in Greenwood and thought it was a very nice place, but to these people from the city it must have seemed like the end of the world. It was an insular world with little outside contact so we didn't see ourselves as being different. It was a shock to learn later that I was brought up in what other people considered a 'ghost town'."

The shock was not one sided. For the Japanese who looked out the train windows, Greenwood might well have seemed the last stop before the train went over the edge of the earth. They saw a narrow mountain valley with a few streets of empty buildings struggling to give the impression of a settlement. Staring back at them from the platform were most of the residents of Greenwood.

The first meeting has been described as "neither warm nor cold but cautious". The Japanese went quietly to their allotted residences and in one hour of one day Greenwood was transformed forever. There are reasons why this first meeting should have gone off so quietly. The Japanese have a saying, *shikata-ga-nai*, which translated loosely means, "It can't be helped". It is an attitude of acceptance, perhaps the result of an upbringing which was then still richly steeped in the fatalism implicit within the religion of Buddhism. It is an attitude of forbearance in difficult circumstances, a method of survival.

That first summer the first Japanese garden plots ripened. Later community baths were set up and cremation sites were erected in accordance with religious beliefs. A bean cake shop opened its doors for business. Bringing their skills as tailors and seamstresses with them, the Japanese conducted sewing and silk embroidery classes. Their children attended Christian elementary schools and within a year of arriving in Greenwood the first Japanese began attending high school. In many ways their integration into the community was remarkable in its quickness, but in other less obvious ways there remained a separation of cultures.

In September, 1980 the Japanese Canadian community of Greenwood participated in its 38th consecutive Labour Day celebrations. In the parade was a float with boys and girls dressed in Japanese costume. In the faces of several of these remarkably beautiful children was a mixture of Caucasian and oriental features. Twenty years earlier an observer would not have seen any offspring of mixed parents. The first intermarriage occurred in 1955. Mrs. Showny Higashi, formerly Jean Clark, remembers the reaction to her marriage: "The community was shocked. There was great opposition to our marriage and the greatest pressure was that our children would not be acceptedbut we were stubborn I guess." Other marriages soon followed. Today a casual visitor to Greenwood will see many children of mixed parentage.



In 1943, a year after the arrival of the Japanese in Greenwood, their softball team was entered in the Labour Day tournament.

The Higashi's eldest son, Shawne, is now in university in Eastern Canada. While still in high school he compiled a report on the Japanese in Greenwood and surrounding areas. It is a moving account of how a people were uprooted and forced to make new lives. He begins by saying he is *sansei*, or third generation Japanese in Canada. Ensuing pages include official documents, letters, personal observations and interviews with *issei* (first generation Japanese in Canada) and *nisei* (second generation).

Toichi Nitsui, who has since passed away, recounts how he was a **veteran** of World War One in the Canadian Army--and then how the fishing boat and an island he owned on the West Coast were confiscated in 1942. He concludes: "Later I was paid \$1,000 (by the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property) for my island and my fishing boat. I never sold that island, I still have the title."

A fellow traveller remembers the trip to Greenwood: "Everything we had was stamped with a number. Our number was 1182. I will never forget that number--it is stamped in my mind forever."

Shawne's father has been asked about the worst part of the evacuation many times before and he has a ready answer: "It was being in Hastings Park and not having a bath for two days," he says with ironic humour. He admits though that the psychological damage done to the Japanese Canadians during World War II will never be entirely forgotten.

Shawne Higashi ends his report: "My father was 15 years old the day he arrived in Greenwood and 34 years later as I am 15, I write this report."

Following the war, the Japanese began leaving the detention camps in large numbers. Under government urging, many Japanese moved east to the Prairies and beyond. Others chose to return to Japan. Evacuees would not be allowed to re-enter the coastal region of B.C. until 1949, but for all practical purposes, by mid-1947 the detention camps were no longer in existence.

For approximately five years the Japanese had been in detention at Greenwood. Their children were born there. When the camps began to close many asked themselves the same question Mrs. Kohn put to me: "They made a life for themselves here--why should they leave."

For a significant number the answer was obvious. There was no reason.

Myler Wilkinson is a freelance writer residing in Grand Forks, B.C. -- a few miles away from Greenwood.

From Brixton to Brazil:

a review of Toronto's 1981 "Festival of Festivals"

BY RICHARD FUNG

The Festival of Festivals is a great boon to Toronto film buffs, not only because of the range and quality of films that come here every September, but also because some cinemas continue to show the most popular films after the last director has returned to his or her country and the silver pass holders have slinked back to their offices after a pretend week at Cannes.

The festival acts as a showcase to distributors, a basically conservative lot. If a film is well acclaimed, and more importantly, well attended at the festival, it's more likely to appear for a trial run in a regular cinema. Even though most cinemas (one should speak of "cinema chains" these days) don't like to take the chance with a subtitled or documentary film, Toronto audiences have recently been treated to such excellent fare as *Babylon*, *Gaijin*, *Prison for Women* and *Pixote*. The appearance of these films on the first run circuit is a direct result of the Festival of Festivals.

Indirectly, the festival produces an important, if not often recognized, effect on the Ontario Censor Board. By focussing the attention of the film world on Toronto, the Board finds itself faced with international ridicule for its condescending puritanism. More importantly, the festival has brought out the contradiction in dollar terms. Explicitly, Toronto, and Ontario desperately crave the publicity and the consequent tourist money that the Festival generates. Since heavy artistic censorship and significant film festivals do not go hand in hand, we have seen the Ontario Censor Board allow uncut screenings to limited audiences at the festival. The fact that the brilliant Brazilian film, *Pixote*, was passed for a regular cinema run after the festival (albeit with the stipulation that it be shown in only one cinema in the entire province) can be traced to the resulting contradiction of interests in the Ontario government.

This year's films were grouped into eleven categories, including: "Laughing Matters: A Comedy Retrospective", "The World of Animation", the work of Turkish Yilmaz Güney: "A Political Profile" and "Buried Treasures". Seventeen story features and documentaries were presented in a section entitled "Culture Under Pressure".



In his introduction to this section, programmer, Jim Munro, wrote in the Festival of Festivals catalogue that these films "run the thematic gamut from cultural celebration to social alienation and lend an international context to questions and issues common to minority groups. Whether they are set in Toronto's Kensington or London's Brixton, these films are not exercises in jackhammer dogma, nor are they a collection of quaint, parochial fairy tales. They are films by filmmakers whose concern with social issues, politics--and the individual dramas therein--are often direct to their own lives."

The first film screened in the "Culture Under Pressure" section was from Britain: Franco Rosso's *Babylon*, a film about black, working class youth in Brixton, the now famous district of London. After the screening Rosso said that being of Italian origin, he is able to empathize with people who are born in Britain but not regarded as British. One feels that the young men in *Babylon* do not even have the choice of trading in the alienated Britain of their birth for the Jamaica of their parents--the Jamaica of their dialect, their music and their religion Rastafarianism.

The Caribbean island has become for them almost what Ethiopia is to the Rastas of Jamaica. That is, an unknown, somewhat mythical place that shares only its name with the actual geographical entity.

With stunning realism (I found it hard to believe that *Babylon* was not made by a Jamaican) the film explores the walled in feeling of being non-white in a racist society--and working class, or worse, jobless, in a decaying capitalist economic system. In the Britain of today the young men in *Babylon* have no future. Neither by reggae, Rastafarianism nor ganja; nor beating up women and gays, can they get to the core of their oppression. Completed in 1980, *Babylon* eerily foreshadows and explains the causes of the 1981 Brixton riots.

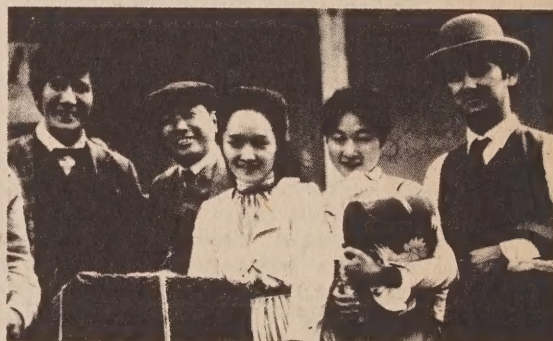
While *Babylon* focused on the children of immigrants, *Les Voleurs de Job* (Where Money Grows on Trees) is a Canadian film which explores what immigrants themselves expect when they arrive in Canada and what they actually get. This film by Tahani Rached is not as confident, sophisticated or polished as *Babylon*. It is obvious that its budget was smaller than the latter's. Its documentary form is not as absorbing as Rosso's narrative. However, *Les Voleurs de Job* does give us real people: immigrant workers in Montreal. There is a man who was a dentist in his native country, but now drives a taxi, a Haitian whose only dream is to have enough money to return home, a Greek woman who develops an awakening feminist and union consciousness.

Rached's film relies heavily on the ironic juxtaposition of contrasting images, a technique developed by Eisenstein over fifty years ago. Surprisingly, she uses this formula exceedingly well. In the closing sequence, a Quebec judge is naturalizing new Canadians in a citizenship court. She waxes about the rights, responsibilities and benefits of being a Canadian. Then, after the handshakes and glowing speeches, the courtroom clears as a crew of immigrant women enters to do the cleaning.

Other films in the "Culture Under Pressure" section dealt with such issues as the effects of technological penetration in rural Turkey; a Chinese-trained doctor confronted with a Canadian medical establishment unwilling to accept her skills; North Africans in France; Turkish guest workers in Germany. *Chuquaigo* is an unpretentious, Bolivian feature which looks at La Paz through the eyes of a peasant boy newly arrived in the city, a "cholo" (racially Indian but Spanish speaking) student determined to emigrate to the United States, a petty bureaucrat and a young woman from a bourgeois family who dabbles in left-wing politics. *Magic in the Sky* covers the Inukshuk Inuit language television project in Frobisher Bay. And *Yap--How Did You*

Know We'd Like TV is a patronizing, though well-meaning, film from Australia that examines the use of American television as a conscious effort to undermine the cultural autonomy of a small island in Micronesia.

The films categorized under "Culture Under Pressure" did explore the limits of cultural change--as well as race/ethnic relations. One of the most novel and interesting was *Gaijin*, the first feature of a Japanese-Brazilian woman named Tizuko Yamasaki. It is the story of the filmmaker's own grandmother who headed off to Brazil in a wave of immigration at the beginning of the century. Titoe, the protagonist, wants to overcome the limited possibilities offered her as a peasant in rural Japan. And, in order to go to Brazil, she marries a man she does not know because only families are eligible for work on the coffee plantations. When the trainload of Japanese arrive at the station in Sao Paulo, the landowners, their future employers, comment on how "delicate" the women are. But the conditions that they provide are anything but delicate: inhumanly long hours; crumbling adobe shacks and no medical facilities. Furthermore, the bosses use the language barrier to isolate the Japanese from the other workers. These workers, mainly Spanish and Italian immigrants, have been trying in vain to negotiate a better deal with the landowners. When one man reaches out to the Japanese and attempts to organize them, he is not only expelled from the plantation, but deported from the country for fomenting labour unrest. Already shocked by this injustice, the Japanese become incensed when they realize that they have been cheated at the company store. Titoe sees her dreams of returning to Japan a rich woman melt away. When her husband dies of easily curable malaria, she leads an exodus to the city.



Years later, working in a factory, Titoe is still saving for her return passage to Japan. But her growing daughter's roots are in Brazil. When Titoe falls in love with a Brazilian (the sympathetic foreman from the plantation), it is clear that she too has sunken her roots. *Gaijin* is set in Brazil in the early part of this century, but it speaks to the history of Asians in Canada as well.

Outside of the "Culture Under Pressure" series, only a smattering of Third World films were presented. Among them were two very solid works by Asian directors. *Jaguar*, from the Philippines and *Akaler Sandhane* (In Search of Famine) from India both appeared in the "Critic's Choice" section. It is interesting to compare these two films because they both tackled the project of film as a medium for social change. It is a truism that politically sophisticated films are often dry, tedious and limited to a tiny academic audience-- Jean-Luc Godard's work is a case in point. On the other hand, popular films, in aiming at the lowest common denominator, limit themselves to the most basic form of consciousness raising--Jane Fonda's most recent movies, for example. Both these approaches present limitations. Many directors, not willing to trade either audience or message equivocate, leave us with works that are undecided and therefore weak. Both *Jaguar* and *Akaler Sandhane* are clear in direction and confident in their method; as different as they may be.

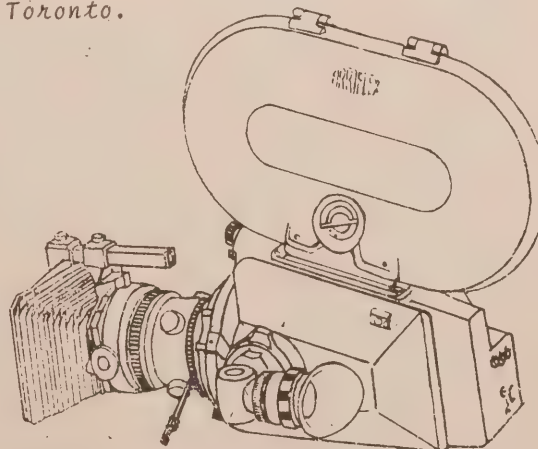
Mrinal Sen's *Akaler Sandhane* is a very complex piece. It is slow in pace and even ponderous at times. It is also one of the most genuinely profound films to pass through Toronto this year. Despite the film's English title--which suggests a documentary about Oxfam-- *Akaler Sandhane* is a film about filmmaking. There have been many films on the subject. But whereas most Western efforts have looked egocentrically into the world of filmmakers themselves (e.g. *Day for Night*, 8½), Sen's film also explores the relationship of crew and cast with the people on the location of a film shooting --in this case, a small Bengali village. The production unit is there to shoot a movie about the 1943 famine. The director wants to make a sympathetic, progressive account of the effects of this famine: mass migration, etc. He takes the point of view of the peasant, but because of his urban and class background, he finds himself cut off from the real peasants he meets in the village. How can theories of the peasantry developed in Calcutta, a large city, hold water here? The director condemns oppression, but his work method is one of arrogance to these 'backward' country people. His leading actress is well meaning but totally unaware of the consequences of her actions. *Akaler Sandhane* is a masterful piece of self-criticism of the filmmaking world and of the left-wing Indian intelligentsia. Its form of a film within a film is carried off by the subtle but nevertheless brilliant performance of Smita Patil playing herself.

Lino Brocka's *Jaguar*, on the other hand, was introduced to the festival as "a very good B movie". Indeed, it is in many ways a formula gangster melodrama in

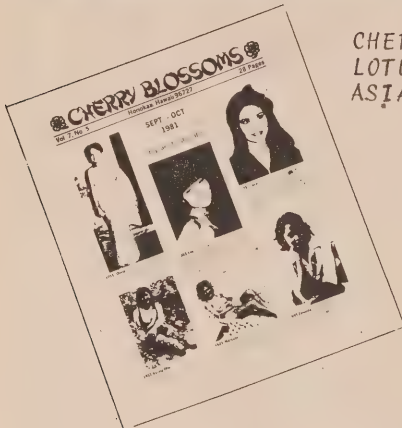
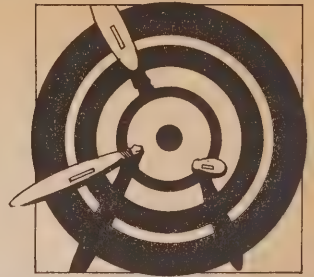
which the handsome hero (Phillip Salvador) and the beautiful heroine (Amy Austria) meet and fall in love amidst tragic circumstances with tragic consequences. It delivers to an audience weaned on American movies just what it expects: sex, violence, glamour and intrigue in a moralistic parable. But *Jaguar* subverts this formula by adding a forceful undercurrent of police brutality, political and sexual repression, government corruption and exploitation. The film also expresses extreme poverty and the Manila slums that the Marcos dictatorship claims do not exist. Its message was so clear that *Jaguar* was banned for export from the Philippines.

Given this notoriety and Brocka's and Salvador's popularity, one would have expected a significant turnout by the Filipino community in Toronto. But of the large crowd that jammed the Festival cinema only a handful of Filipinos was evident. There is an obvious reason for this. It is the Festival of Festivals' policy that with popular films, pass holders have priority. Consequently, anyone wishing to see only *Jaguar* did not have a very good chance of getting in. But to understand why there were so few blacks at *Babylon* or East Indians at *Akaler Sandhane*, we must look at the Festival of Festivals itself. It is clear that not enough effort was made to target the audiences for specific films. This would be a horrendous task. But given the dearth of good Third World films screened in Toronto, many people who would have rushed to *Gaijin* or *Babylon* did not even know of their existence. Indeed, most of Toronto was oblivious to the Festival of Festivals. Even though much of the program is very politically progressive, the Festival of Festivals is still constituted as something for the elite--the intellectual, the trendy, the well-to-do. After all, who else these days can afford to take a week off work and pay 100 dollars for a silver pass?

Richard Fung is a freelance writer and a Cinema Studies student at the University of Toronto.



on the firing line



CHERRY BLOSSOMS!
LOTUS BLOSSOMS!
ASIAN WOMEN FOR SALE!

by
Momoye Sugiman

A century ago Chinese and Japanese women were imported to North America as "picture brides" ordered by Asian workers--or as sexual slaves to be auctioned off in public markets to white merchants. Under such dehumanizing circumstances, there was a very thin line between marriage and servitude. In both cases, women were perceived as commodities whose market value was determined by age, state of health and physical attractiveness.

Today the Asian flesh trade is still around in the guise of a catalogue 'penpal' service run by an American couple named John and Kelly Broussard. Playing upon the subservient, geisha girl stereotype which Hollywood has imprinted upon the North American psyche, the Broussards produce two catalogue-magazines, appropriately entitled "Cherry Blossoms" and "Lotus Blossoms". Appearing six times a year, these publications contain the names, addresses, photographs and autobiographical blurbs of thousands of women from all parts of Asia who are seeking marriage to Canadian and American men. For one hundred American dollars one can receive three issues of either publication, along with an "indispensible 35-page booklet called *"How to Write to Oriental Ladies"* and a chance to earn a \$2.00 credit slip just for stating your three favourite ladies from each issue." The treatment of these Asian women as inanimate merchandise is further indicated by the fact that each is identified by a serial number and customers are invited to place orders via a 24-hour answering service. Proudly (and perhaps defensively) waving their seal of approval from the Better Business Bureau of Hawaii, the Broussards also note that they accept payment by Master Charge, Visa

or Diner's Club. They want potential customers to know that theirs is not a sleazy, fly-by-night operation, but something quite respectable in the eyes of the law. Catering primarily to white, North American, sexist, middle class men--who have been unable or unwilling to establish relationships with North American women, "Cherry Blossoms" has grown into a thriving business in its seven year existence. The demand is seemingly endless and the supply of women is seemingly endless and cheap. Clearly, the thousands of subscribers have swallowed the stereotype of Asian women as ideal housewives, i.e. submissive, obedient, sexually innovative, Suzy Wong dolls. And the thousands of women who have allowed themselves to appear in "Cherry Blossoms" have undoubtedly swallowed the stereotype of the superior American male--along with the great lie about North America being the Land of Gold where a woman can feel secure and escape a lifetime of dead end jobs. And it is obvious from the autobiographical captions that they have swallowed the greatest lie of all: that their self-worth and identity are contingent upon a man. As one 30 year-old Filipina in Hong Kong writes: "Please introduce me to the best gentleman you have. When I'm married I'm happy. I'm happy to go anywhere with my loving husband. I always try to learn everything he wants...."

The Broussards' exploitation of these women may not be as overt as that of the 19th century slave traders, but the underlying racist-sexist-capitalist premise is basically the same. These women are motivated by the belief that life will be better here and the Broussards are blatantly capitalizing on this naivete, feeding on and perpetuating lies on both sides of the world. As a woman, and as an Asian Canadian, I cannot separate myself from my misguided Asian counterparts. I cringe when I try to imagine their marriages to the subscribers of "Cherry Blossoms". I want to scream or cry when I consider the fact that they will never have a chance to realize their full potentials. As long as enterprises like "Cherry Blossoms" remain alive, Asian women will be exploited and non-Asians will perceive Asian and Asian Canadian women through the American G.I. lense. The offensive geisha girl label is too easily slapped on us, distorting our image in the eyes of the world--and in our own eyes.

NO NAME CHINA JACKS

anthony chan

During the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, 15,000 Chinese rail hands and assorted labourers opened up the British Columbia frontier from May 14, 1880 to July 29, 1885 by doing the bidding of Boss Andrew Onderdonk. By the time Donald A. Smith drove the last spike at Craigellachie on November 7, 1885, most of the Chinese workers had already drifted eastward to Toronto and Montreal or to the Pacific coast to find work in Victoria and Vancouver. These were the nameless, forgotten and despised workers who carved a niche in the history of Canada.

In time, stories and, finally, legends began to be spun about the exploits of these fearless individuals who tackled whatever job Canada could dish out. These were the No Name China Jacks who lived a life of adventure in the heart of white racism, learned to live without loved ones, blew a week's pay on an ascent into oblivion and get rich schemes financed by rich Chinese merchants, and found comfort with women who neither cared where they came from or where they were going.

The following tale is an excerpt from a forthcoming book tentatively entitled "GOLD MOUNTAIN: THE CHINESE IN THE NEW WORLD", scheduled for publication in the spring of 1982.

BACHELOR QUARTERS

Bachelor workers who often had wives and children to support in China economized in every aspect of life in Canada. Many of the cooks, laundry employees and domestic labourers, earning from \$20.00 to \$30.00 every month, lived in crowded boarding houses because this accommodation was all they could afford. A typical building used to lodge Chinese workers in Victoria was often three stories high with a floor space of 10 x 30 feet. Some with 10 foot ceilings occasionally had an additional floor that was constructed about half way between the floor and the ceiling. Two stories were built out of one.

The lower floor was split into small rooms separated from the walls by narrow hallways which could only accommodate two

average size adults walking side by side or passing each other on the way to their rooms. Every room was stocked with three low bunks covered by a mat and one or two quilts. While the second floor was almost a replica of the first, the third floor was gloomy and lacked a free flow of fresh air. Without windows, it was lit by an ordinary kerosene lamp.

Other workers who made less than \$20.00 a month had no other choice but to find lodging in one-storey boarding houses constructed with rough lumber. Closely imitating a lumber or railroad camp bunkhouse, they were flanked by merchant shops in the heart of Chinatown. Inside, a worker shared a 10 x 10 foot room with five others in a double tier of three bunks covered with a mat. With only one small pane of glass, sunlight and ventilation were at a premium.

Like Victoria, the Vancouver housing situation was bleak. In one Chinatown rooming house known as The Armstrong, 27 rooms at 20 feet long, 13 feet wide, and 10 feet high, were sectioned off on the second floor. Each room contained a square table, 6 beds --and a stove for cooking rice, preserved duck, eggs and vegetables. A month's rent cost the worker 50¢ each or \$3.00 for the room itself. On Carrall Street, another lodging house had 19 rooms accomodating 50 labourers at \$2.50 to \$3.00 per month.

POPPIES

Forced to return to crowded and sometimes unsanitary rooming houses after working at low paying jobs, many lonely and despondent labourers turned to opium as the best alternative to madness. Ever since British merchants, backed by Her Majesty's gunboats, realized that vast profits could be made by selling such an addictive drug to a China with a market of 400,000,000, opium was easily available for any country touched by Britain's special brand of imperialism.

Opium into Canada during the 19th century came from two sources: British-controlled Hong Kong and the United States. Starting slowly, the import value of the Hong Kong variety exploded from \$810.00 in the initial year of business in 1882 to \$6,640.00 in the following year. From

then on, imports steadily increased until 1880 when Canada became the only legal outlet of opium in North America. As a prelude to its own exclusion act of May 3, 1882, the U.S. government in 1880 passed a law prohibiting the production of opium in America. Since Chinese involvement in the opium trade was a matter-of-fact in the eyes of the law makers, the act was directed against the Chinese community. By 1880, however, 372,880 pounds of the drug had already been shipped from San Francisco to British Columbia.

The legal evaporation of the American source forced the drug pushers to move their factories to Victoria's Chinatown. By 1883, eleven opium shops, with an annual take of over \$3 million, became the main producers and distributors of this reddish brown, heavily scented drug throughout North America. The trade was so lucrative that even the British Columbia government took a cut in its imposition of a \$500.00 yearly licence fee.

Most of the drug was transported by employees of the CPR from Asia to Canada and from the Canadian West Coast through the Rockies and onward towards Toronto and Montreal. Compared to liquor law violations, police enforcement of the drug took a back seat. In the 1880s and 1890s, opium affected few white Canadians and, therefore, was not a social problem. That it debilitated and ruined the lives of Chinese immigrants was of little consequence to the fabric of Canadian society. Despite the casual attitude of the police, the drug was seized if a shipment appeared destined for the United States. In 1891, a consignment of 141 pounds was confiscated at Swift Current. A saloon in Sweet Grass, Montana was shut down when the Northwest Mounted Police told the Americans that it was a transfer point for opium into continental United States. While the Canadian police often acted indifferently to the drug, surveillance of known drug traffickers was a stated policy and duty. One of these smugglers was Donald McLean, better known as 'Little Dan' or 'Opium Dan', who rented land on the prairies in "Township 23, Range 2, west of the 3rd Meridian" while working as a cook or steward on a Pacific steamer. Police speculated that McLean's activities netted him at least \$15,000.00.

While there were countless small time operators like 'Opium Dan', a few Chinese merchants extracted a fortune out of the drug trade by capitalizing on the lonely existence of Chinese workers in North America. From the gold rush days in California and British Columbia until well after the completion of Canadian and American railways, between 40% to 50% of the Chinese were hooked on the drug at a cost of 80¢ for a little more than an ounce. In the late 1880s, the cost soared

to \$1.20 for the same amount. By 1901, three Victoria firms with 18 partners had monopolized the manufacturing of the drug. Seven years later, opium production was outlawed by the Canadian government. This forced the producers to operate clandestinely and the price skyrocketed accordingly.

Like the use of alcohol, opium became a social intoxicant for Chinese and whites alike. Chinese associations always had the drug on hand for their members at each meeting. But the bulk of the opiate eaters or smokers were the bachelor workers who would drown their sorrows in the drug. Like taverns and saloons, opium houses were easily accessible and fully stocked with an assortment of brands and the latest paraphernalia.

Completely unlike cigarette smokers, opium addicts needed a pipe about the length and thickness of a common flute. The tip of the pipe taken into the mouth was flattened to accommodate the person's lips. On the other end was a bowl of terra cotta about the size of a *demi-tasse* that was connected to the stem. The opium smoked by the worker, merchant, white doctor and lawyer, or the infamous Emily Wharton, was a dark gummy paste made ready by roasting a pea size amount of opium. Placed in the hole of the bowl, the drug was then ready for consumption. The average addict took about twelve pipes in one sitting for a total ascent on to the edge of reality.

A REAL 'CHINAMAN'S' CHANCE

In sober and optimistic moments, gambling parlours, owned and operated by merchants, were opened night and day to the bachelor workers who had time to kill after a regular shift cleaning house at a white minister's home or ironing shirts for a local judge. From the days of the gold rush in 1858, gambling had always existed. Leisure moments off the sand bars and later in the railroad camps were spent at games of chance. Like the itinerant dealers on ocean freighters, short-run ferry ships and trans-continental railways, individuals with quick hands and an instinct for the weakness of others set the stakes, rules and banking times. These were unique personae who signed on as a cook's helper in a camp or a steward on a steamer from Victoria to Hong Kong. Recognizing that a crew's hours of relaxation in a life without women or families had to be filled, the wandering dealer provided a necessary service for the Chinese worker. In time, a romantic aura and colourful tales sprang up around these adventurers. Stories of their deeds and travels to exotic places often excited the imagination of the young who might have seen the token fences around Chinatown confining and dulling. Repetitious work in a laundry or

restaurant added to this quest for constant newness. The itinerant gambler became a hero and model for those growing up in the back of a shop filled with the Confucian values of respecting one's elders, upholding the quasi-gentry standards of the community, and never disrupting the hard-fought social harmony of status-conscious and conservative Chinatown. Because of these awesome restrictions in a growing community always under siege by the outer world, a merchant's son who aspired to become a professional dealer was better off leaving those thoughts to the world of fantasy. Since sons were like precious jewels in the early Chinese communities, conformity and obedience were the catch-words drilled into their minds. Thus, a continuation of such physically stable occupation like a cafe owner or shopkeeper could take place. This gave the Chinese presence in Canada a rock-hard foundation--and with the ongoing growth of families, a place in the sun.

While the professional Chinese gambler went from one wilderness camp or moving vessel to another, there were also well-defined places of chance established by the merchant pillars of the Chinese community. The first organized betting activity started in Victoria's Fan Tan Alley which became so well-known across Chinese communities in North America that it was nicknamed 'Bank Street' by its local and out-of-town customers. During its best years after the Chinese completion of the CPR in 1884, Fan Tan Alley held close to twelve houses of chance and several eating places for the hungry players.

Not more than 200 feet in length and so narrow that two people could never pass each other without touching the other, the alley itself served more as a pathway. Always crowded with a variety of people, Fan Tan Alley was not only the hot spot for gambling, but also became a place for conducting business or meeting friends.

Inside a gambling house, high-rolling hustlers, pimps or highbinders in the latest San Francisco styles, simple labourers in cotton garments, and paunchy merchants were always greeted with the come-ons from front door hawkers of prepared sidewalk meals, ready-made clothing, high tone boots, potent brews, or whatever a customer wanted. Beyond them were

special gambling booths separated from the front by walls and doors. The almost cemetery quietness, interrupted by the occasional clicking of cash pieces or bamboo tiles, marked the seriousness of each game. In the larger houses, 100 bettors could jam into the various booths while the smaller ones took in several dozen gamblers.

During the heyday of Fan Tan Alley, singsong girls, acrobats and even Chinese opera players were hired from San Francisco to entertain in the gambling houses or in a merchant owned theatre. At 5¢ to 20¢, opera tickets could be bought by even the poorest labourer.

These diversions, however, could never have competed with the serious business of getting something for nothing. While labourers might lose a day's pay in an hour of betting, restaurants and laundries could change hands in the course of an evening. Such games as *paifu*, sparrow, dominos, *tianjiu*, policy, *mahjong*, or *Fan Tan* could relieve even the most experienced of a life's savings or increase a worker's labour to an immigration broker who was usually a merchant as well.

The most popular game enticing labourers to part with their hard earned cash was 'policy'--also called lottery or numbers. Since the initial bet could be as low as a nickel or a dime and the payoff potential enormous, a worker could play until his penny ante stash dried up. In its simplest form, a player would bet 5¢ on the total paid attendance at a theatre showing a Chinese opera on a particular day, for example. Odds placed at 999 to one against the bettor left many a gambler with lighter pockets. But, in the unlikely chance that a player successfully predicted the number of paid customers at the opera, the house paid \$25.00 on a 25¢ bet at 500 to one.

For the high-rollers, the principal game was Fan Tan. While betting could vary from a dime in a very low stake game to hundreds of dollars, the game, unlike policy, involved some skill. It consisted of a dealer, who was often a former itinerant professional who tired of the road or whose health was declining, and a paying-teller if the game involved more than 60 people. The dealer also served as the banker.

Holding a tapered whale bone stick cut to a small bow at one of the ends, the dealer sat at the front of a rectangular table with an inverted tin bowl by his elbow. After calling for the players to show their betting ranges by throwing in a traditional round cash piece made of brass and characterized by a square hole in the centre, the dealer can decide to close the bets at any time. After raking in the pieces with the whale bone stick, all except the last three (or four) were



Bachelor workers at leisure.

counted. Bets were then taken on the number of pieces left and whether they were odd or even.

Despite the popularity of gambling as an initial means of filling in leisure hours, workers and others often left the gambling tables empty-handed. The house rule was winner take all. But because this was a house rule, the merchant who ran the house amassed a fortune.

BLAMING THE VICTIM?

Another enterprise that filled the coffers of certain merchants was prostitution. Along with the establishment of branch businesses selling confectionary goods, clothing, rice and other necessary items in Victoria and later in Vancouver by San Francisco entrepreneurs, girls and young women specifically groomed for prostitution were transported to Canada's early Chinatowns from California. Almost immediately after the movement of miners and labourers through Victoria to the sand bars of the Fraser River, brothels were set up in the cities and towns along the mining trails.

While white prostitutes in Victoria outnumbered Chinese hookers by a wide margin of 150 to 4 in 1902, the presence of Chinese prostitutes once again symbolized a separation of the races even in the most intimate of matters. Mixing of the races was a taboo unless it involved white, men and Chinese women.

Dr. Arthur B. Stout, a member of the California State Board of Health, summed up the white opinion of interracial sex by saying that: "If a first-class Chinese woman and a first-class white man would marry, it would be a much better cross than the white man on the negro or the white man on the Indian." But the most common white view was expressed by yet another prominent American. S. Clinton Hastings, who was a Chief Justice of the American Supreme Court, commented that "the progeny of Chinese and whites cannot procreate, or their offsprings would be so impotent that perhaps in the majority of offsprings, it would be no better than a mule." This remark spoke for a whole century of white North American attitudes toward miscegenation between Chinese people and whites.

Because of these sentiments, certain Chinese merchants realized that easy profits could be made from the obvious needs of the bachelor workers and the curiosity of the white pleasure seekers. At first, the women were bought from the flesh market in San Francisco which was the centre of the slave trade for all Asian women. Like the class differences between merchants and labourers, the brothels were split into the higher status and better paying parlour work and the lower esteemed crib prostitution.

Women working in the parlours took the higher paying merchants and Chinese

customers in expensive entertainment rooms. Those in a crib arrangement were forced to depend on the labourers to keep their high-binders in the latest fashions and to stay alive. "The cribs were back alley operations where up to six women worked in slatted crates about 12' x 14', furnished with a curtain, a pallet, wash basin, a couple of chairs and a mirror. A woman who 'pledged' her body to a crib operation had a life expectancy of six to eight years. After that, she was debilitated by disease, beatings and starvation and allowed to 'escape' to die at the Salvation Army, or at a 'hospital'."

The sale of Chinese women in San Francisco was such an open secret that the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported the "particularly fine portions of the cargo, the fresh and pretty females who came from the interior are used to fill special orders from wealthy merchants and prosperous tradesmen." Merchants from Victoria were part of the audience that saw women "stripped and paraded on to a platform where prospective buyers could inspect and bid."

Bought and sold like commodities in an American market that skyrocketed in price from a low of \$500.00 to a high of \$2,500.00 after the exclusion act of 1882, San Francisco women sold to Victoria flesh peddlers demanded what the market could bear. But, by 1884 when a surge of workers from the railway camps headed for the west coast, women and young girls from Hong Kong and Macao by way of Guangdong, Jiangsi and Zhejiang provinces had already arrived in Victoria and Vancouver. Children as young as six years to young women in their late teens from poverty-stricken peasant and worker's families in China were the most sought after.

Because of the backward feudal conditions of rural China, female children were always considered inferior to their brothers. Unable to provide the muscle power necessary for farm work, the birth of a girl in a peasant family was a cause for sorrow. With a Confucian value system based on male supremacy, women were expendable from the day of their birth. A father of daughters could only hope for prospective sons-in-law, requests for a concubine from wrinkled, but wealthy merchants, officials, or a well-off peasant, or, if nothing else, the filling of an order from a gentry for bondmaids. Women in feudal China served no useful purpose except as sexual objects, baby makers, or beasts of burden. If none of these options materialized and times were severe, especially during or after civil wars or rebellions, a father sought out a brothel keeper for his most attractive daughters. Custom and economic crisis forced Chinese families to look down on their daughters. The selling of female children and young women into the flesh market was the last desperate attempt to keep the remaining members of the family together.



The inequality and brutal use of women was nothing new in China. Prostitution in North America simply reflected the new world link to that chain of human exploitation. No one in the Chinese community tried to stop this trade in human cargo except perhaps some love-sick bachelor. But his efforts to save a woman from further confinement led inevitably to slashed hands and broken ribs administered by the highbinders of the women's brothel. These enforcers were the muscles that kept the coffers of a few merchants filled. They were also the hit men who tried to prevent white evangelists and servants of the Lord from saving the souls of the 'depraved' Chinese women who were locked into 'earthly damnation'.

Victims of a chauvinistic society in China, used to line the pockets of a few merchants in North America, these women easily fell prey to the evangelism of white missionaries and soul savers. But for the lack of any real alternative, entrance into the kingdom of God was more promising than a life with no more to look forward to than a syphilitic death before the age of 25.

The most famous rescue centre for the victims of merchant greed was Miss Morgan's Chinese Girls' Home in Victoria. Established in 1888 and supported by the Women's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, the home specialized in helping Chinese girls and women escape from the clutches of the highbinders and their bosses. No one was ever forced to take refuge in the home. As Miss Morgan said, "unless they want us to help them, we can't help them."

Since 1888, the home rescued 40 Chinese and 8 Japanese girls and women between the ages of seven and twenty-four from prostitution. By 1902, twenty-two had married Chinese labourers, four were living in the home, three had returned to their old life, and some returned to China. All were baptized and brought into the Methodist faith. Those who were forced back

into prostitution provoked Miss Morgan and her staff to take legal action. On one occasion, it took \$120.00 in legal fees to reclaim a runaway. Another cost \$270.00 in court costs.

Since the Chinese Girls' Home became a well known rescue centre, many labourers began to frequent the place in hopes of becoming Christian. But, according to Miss Morgan, a Chinese bachelor "will profess to become a Christian to get a wife."

While there were others like Gardner Loman who tried to help runaways by providing a place of refuge and courses in home economics, there were some who tried to profit from the misery of these women. One such case involved an individual by the name of Mains who enticed young women into his home by offering protection from the highbinders and the beginning of a new life. But there was nothing new in this promise. When Mains was caught, the judge ordered a sentence of eight months of hard labour for the abduction and sale of women for prostitution.

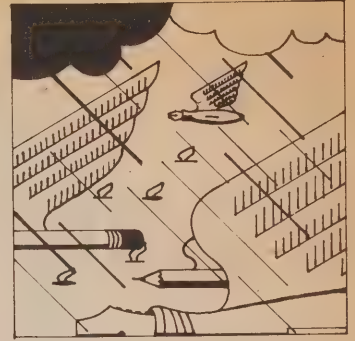
Prostitution as an economic transaction among men, rather than as a result of a woman's depravity, was, however, emphasized by Lee Mon-kow, a Chinese interpreter at the Customs House in Victoria. A resident of the city since 1882, Lee told the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration that a contract was usually drawn up between a poor peasant woman through a brothel dealer and a Chinese merchant who would pay the woman's head tax, passage costs, and expenses. In return, the contractor "had the right to her body service." She undertook "to pay a certain sum at a certain time, to repay the passage money and the head tax and seven per cent interest." In 1902, Lee had only come across three cases of such contractual arrangements. One of the three was for a woman named Woon Ho who cost \$302.00 plus \$7.00 for clothing and \$4.00 for a leather trunk.

Despite the low ratio of Chinese prostitutes to whites, it was a flourishing business for some Chinese merchants. Along with opium, gambling, and immigration interests, these individuals controlled the destinies of the bachelor workers.

(Editor's Note: The footnotes for the above article have been omitted for space considerations. If you are interested in following up on particular references, look out for Mr. Chan's book which should be available later this year.

Anthony Chan is one of the founders of The Asianadian. He is currently residing in Saskatoon where he does freelance work.

Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta



UNITED AMERICAN LOYALISTS

LAST STOP BEFORE MANIFEST DESTINY

cold cold northern dim lit station
early morning's refugees
in from the night
stamping yesterday's smell
from today's shoes

everyones a tiny train
brain fuelled incessantly
smoking leaking held breath
from the mouth
 coughing spitting
on the going-nowhere platform

AMERICA LIKE A DISASTER--
MOVIE SCREEN
COMES CRASHING THROUGH
FRONT PAGES

1980

they put their newspapers to bed
with cold type

they expose their journalistic muscles
in the self-made mirror
of objectivity

they weigh in with silent majorities
and vocal minorities

they speak with tongues
of spokes-men and press-agents
they converse with man-of-the-street
opinions
they moralise against women--
taking-the-night diversions
they advocate scab-through-picket-line
individuality

they think they're referees
but look at their ad-section!

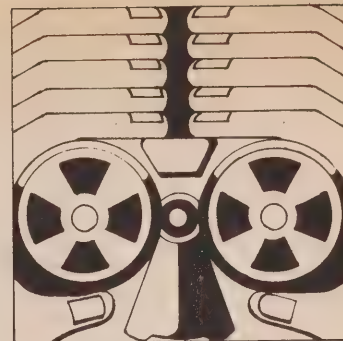
they are corporate cheerleaders
with locker-room privileges
during and after the game

1980

*The above poems are reprinted with permission from
"DOMESTIC BLISS", the poet's recently published
poetry anthology. (Toronto: Is Five Press, 1981)*

Face to Face

with GORDON CHONG



A dentist by profession, Dr. Gordon Chong, 38, was elected senior alderman of Toronto's Ward 6 in November, 1980. He has been involved in Chinese community affairs all his life and continues to be one of the community's leading and controversial spokespersons. A fourth generation Chinese Canadian, Chong is married to the former Lorinne Matsui, a third generation Japanese Canadian. They have three children.

The following interview with Gordon Chong was conducted in October, 1981 by Daniel C. Lee for THE ASIANADIAN.

ASIANADIAN: Do you consider yourself to be a Chinese Canadian, a Canadian of Chinese descent--or a Canadian?

CHONG: A Canadian of Chinese descent. The distinction is that you are primarily a Canadian, but obviously have a certain amount of Chinese thinking. You can't get away from it. Genetically, that's what you are. I don't pin a great deal of importance on labels because we tend to get hung up on categorizing people. It's unfortunate that so much time and energy is wasted doing things like that. You lose sight of what the person stands for and what the person does.

ASIANADIAN: There has been criticism of the so-called 'hyphenated Canadians'. Is there a happy medium?

CHONG: There better be a happy medium. If you look carefully at the Asians who spend a lot of time going back to their roots, they're usually third or fourth generation, such as the Japanese *sansei*. In many cases, they are people who unfortunately were brought up with very little of, say Chinese, culture and language. They feel as though they've missed out on something and I suppose they have. But in putting so much emphasis on past heritage, they're in danger of overlooking the fact that they are in Canada. You have to achieve a balanced approach in that you want to learn things that come from your father's or grandfather's culture and heritage, but you don't want to spend so much time in researching them that you lose the opportunities given to you to move into the mainstream even more in Canada. After all, this is where we're going to make our home--where our kids are going to be raised. So it's much more important, at least in my pragmatic approach, to achieve as much as you can here.

ASIANADIAN: So, it's a matter of priorities?

CHONG: Yes. I would never put that at the top of my list of priorities, nor would I suggest my children do it. If I were asked for advice, I'd simply advise people that, Yes, you have to find out where your roots are and learn about them, but that really isn't the essence of your being in Canada. First and foremost, you're a Canadian. You may be a Canadian of Chinese descent, and you have to bring your particular perspective and particular experience to bear in the Canadian context, but, nevertheless, you're a Canadian first. I guess I noticed it first among the *sansei* because their second generation parents, the *nisei*, were encouraged not to be Japanese because of

the War and the things that happened during the War. I think there is perhaps a very precipitous, an almost impulsive--I don't know if those are the right words, but I haven't given it a lot of thought recently, so those are the words I choose--for the *sansei* to spend a little too much time going back into their Japanese culture and I think they're sacrificing progress that they could achieve in Canada by doing it.

ASIANADIAN: *I think a lot of sansei do this because they realize they have not done enough of it.*

CHONG: My feeling is that it's a never ending thing so you don't have to spend two or three years of your life at it. It's not as if it's so important that you have to do it now or else it's lost forever.

ASIANADIAN: *Getting back to "mainstream", what do you see as the "Canadian mainstream"?*

CHONG: What I would like us to do is get into positions of power and influence--whether it's in politics, civil service or financial institutions. We've been kept out of them in the past and you cannot effect real, long term, meaningful change from the outside. The idea is to get inside and go as far as you can. It seems that a Canadian-born who could speak the language very well is considered mainstream, but if you never make it to the top of a profession, then you are really not in the mainstream. You're still a token. I don't mean that we have to be assimilated, because we can't be assimilated. I'm talking about integration. Some people may not make a distinction, but I do. When I talk about integration, I mean you move into an area but you don't forget everything about your heritage. You retain a certain attachment. And, you know, it's not easy being a non-white. It's tough. You have to work at it.

ASIANADIAN: *As a member of a visible minority and as a politician, how do you view the role of multiculturalism?*

CHONG: There's good and bad to everything. The good things everybody talks about. Some of the bad things about multiculturalism and the giving of grants include the fact that it tends to encourage people to stay within their own little groups. I'm cynical enough to think that it's not above some people to use that to keep a lot of

ethnics "back on the farm". It sounds good: We're helping them retain their culture and heritage. It's like motherhood--you shouldn't come out against it. But the very obvious, negative thing about it is that the more time people spend doing that, the less time they have for other things. Which means the less time they have to pay attention to what's going on in government, the less time they have to pay to their own professions and entering into a position where they can influence things.

ASIANADIAN: *What's the solution? Cut back on money spent on multiculturalism?*

CHONG: I think eventually they might have to cut back. I don't know. The short term solution has to come from the individual ethnic communities. See it for what it is. Don't get caught up in it, just because you're getting some freebie handout. A family unit can encourage the retention of heritage and culture in their own way--in a very significant way--and that may be more meaningful. I think that, for example, the Chinese community, up until the last few years, has been so ghettoized and I don't mean physically in Chinatown, it's just the way we think.

ASIANADIAN: *What about something like the heritage language programs? Do you think in the long run it might be a bad thing?*

CHONG: I think they're good, but my reasons for supporting them are probably not the same as those who are recent immigrants. My reasons for supporting a heritage program is for its communication value. Let's take for example, a first generation immigrant family. You have a grandfather, or a grandmother, a father and a mother who don't speak English very well--and let's say a child who's born here or someone who's come here when they were really young. A Canadian-born will integrate very well in the Canadian society, but the parents and grandparents might not. They may not understand a lot of the things that are going on. Now if the kids don't speak the language (of their parents and grandparents), well, then they can't communicate. If you have a heritage language program, children learn the language and can act as a conduit between the broader community and their own family. They can act as interpreters not only to interpret documents that are brought home, but to interpret social mores to the older generation. By doing that, they will

then allow that generation that might have been lost in the shuffle to become a little better Canadians.

ASIANADIAN: You were quoted in a "Toronto Star" article as saying "Chinese are just as racist as anyone else." What did you mean by that?

CHONG: Granted it was a calculated statement I made, but I figured it was worth making provided it was put in context in the whole article. If people question me on it, I'd give them the same explanation. It's a fact of life and if we're going to be critical of others and not be able to accept a little criticism ourselves, I think we may be taking ourselves a little too seriously.

ASIANADIAN: You are chairman of the Working Subcommittee on Policing. What kind of programs or steps do you feel are necessary toward improving police-minority relations?

CHONG: First of all, we're looking at the recruitment and hiring practices; training and career development of the police force. We haven't come to any conclusions yet. One of the things that troubles us is the number of visible minorities who are not in higher echelons of the police force. A certain amount of racism may play a part, but we may not be getting the type of applicants who will go as far as they can, as well. Police work's not attractive to Chinese, never has been. If you can go out and become a lawyer or a doctor, that is the route you want to go. You don't want to be a cop. And considering the reputation of the Hong Kong police, many of the people who come here are not really interested. One of the ways to improve the relationships between the police and the various minority communities would be to have more visible minorities and more people from their particular ethnic community on the force, so that they can identify with them and use them as possible role models. The difficulty is how to attract the people to make applications to become policemen. One of the ways may be to look at the whole structure and the way the police are administered. Now, may be there is nothing about being a cop that's attractive; may be the money isn't good enough. So we have to look at the structure and possibly suggest ways the structure should be changed so that a policing career will look more attractive and compare favorably with say, being a lawyer, a journalist or anybody else.

I would suspect that the subcommittee will go on meeting for at least six to ten months.

ASIANADIAN: What prompted you to run for political office? What motivations did you have?

CHONG: I've been a member of a political party since I graduated (from university) about 14 years ago. I officially became a card-carrying Conservative about 11 years ago. The reason for doing it is because I'm of Chinese descent and there are very few Chinese people involved in politics. That was my first motivation. And having been through election campaigns and organizing, I have been asked to run before and this time I was asked to run again. I looked at it and thought I could win. That's why I ran. I could've run in North York. As a matter of fact, it would not have mattered to me one way or the other if I thought I could win. It's more important that we Chinese show our faces where they're not usually seen.

ASIANADIAN: What about the federal by-election in the Spadina riding last August? Why were you asked to run and why did you pass it up?

CHONG: I suppose in their own perverted way they thought I might be an attractive candidate. I don't know. I didn't want to run and I didn't think I was the ideal candidate either--because I was new in office, had a lot to learn and certainly didn't see myself as a federal representative.

ASIANADIAN: The "W-5" issue. A report in the November 3, 1980 "Varsity" (University of Toronto student paper) alleged that you dissuaded the ad hoc committee from supporting legal action against CTV and that you opposed the January, 26, 1981 anti-W-5 rally. May be you could set the record straight on that.

CHONG: I don't really want to talk about W-5 anymore because I'm getting quite fed up with the whole issue. I was asked to get legal opinions on legal action because if you have \$25,000 to spend, they felt that a public relations campaign would be much more cost-beneficial than to seek legal action. These were from some of the top lawyers in Toronto. I was certainly not opposed to any rally. I didn't appear at the rally because it would've been counter-productive at that point. After I got the legal opinions and it was obvious people weren't interested in hearing them,

they still considered me a sufficiently good representative to appear before the Ontario Cabinet ministers to explain the program and why we as a community felt very strongly about it. I personally opposed the W5 program, but I think where we parted company was the difference in tactics employed.

ASIANADIAN: *The Sun Yat-sen statue controversy. What kind of lessons, if any, do you think the Chinese community learned from that debacle?*

CHONG: I don't think the Chinese community learns too much at all over the years. I may be getting a little cynical now because of the strong opposition that I feel in some cases was directed at me personally; and some people don't think that's a very valid observation, but I would suspect that a certain segment of the Chinese community, because of the W5 thing and their misinterpretation of my actions probably want to go after me whenever they get an opportunity to do so.



ASIANADIAN: *Growing up in the 1950s, did you experience a lot of racism and prejudice? What effect did it have on your thinking?*

CHONG: Some, not a lot. What I did see was prejudice at the adult level--institutional racism. Even though my father was an interpreter at City Hall, he was sort of a token. That's the kind of prejudice I grew up with. It made me very determined to show that Chinese were just as good at, if not better at a lot of the things they considered themselves to be superior at. That's one of the reasons why I took an interest in school, not only academically but in athletics. I don't want to say that people complain too much, because we have a valid reason to complain about the way we're treated. If, as in the Jewish community, we were to take the prejudice directed at us and turn it

around, make ourselves stronger, work harder to overcome it and get into positions where we haven't been before, then that would be a more positive kind of reaction. That's why I'm no longer interested in discussing the W5 thing. I no longer think that hanging on to that is a healthy thing. We should be going ahead. Again, it's really funny because when I was growing up--and I had a lot of personal connections with people who were two, three or four generations in this country--we never even thought about celebrating the railway workers. The people who are doing it, except for Jim Pon, have had no connection with it. And I wondered: What the hell is going on? I mean why are they so interested in bringing it up--not that we shouldn't be proud of the fact that we helped build the railroad. Are we bringing up all these facts to make people feel guilty, to give us something? If you make people feel a little too guilty, then they're going to say, "Aw, hell. We're tired of hearing all this stuff."

ASIANADIAN: *What kind of political goals are you setting for yourself? You said that the alderman's position isn't that important to you. What is?*

CHONG: The most important thing to me is that I don't sacrifice my relationship with my family for politics. I don't think there's any community service--that includes the Chinese community--any political office that is worth that. Considering the hassle that I've gotten in the last ten months, I'm beginning to wonder--this will probably be misquoted someday--whether it's worth my being so aware of the fact that I'm Chinese and trying to bring the Chinese to the forefront in a political sense. Why should I sacrifice myself personally if all I do is get hassled by my own community?

ASIANADIAN: *What's your philosophy in life?*

CHONG: It has a lot to do with the fact that I was brought up in a Chinese way. I would like to do what I can to enhance the position of the Chinese Canadian community, but I will certainly never sacrifice my personal leisure time to the extent that I become neurotic about it. I'm just not going to do that. Life is too short. I've paid a lot of my dues over the years already. I don't intend to pay many more.

MEMOIRS OF A CHINESE SCHOOL DROP-OUT

By ??....

alias KEVIN WAN

(Author's note: All the names in this autobiographical work have been changed to protect the embarrassed.)

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from four to six o'clock, I would go to Chinese School, which was held in the basement of St. Matthew's Church. I hated and resented it. I hated going there to see the people and the depressing surroundings and to breathe the air which had a smell reminiscent of pickled socks. But I went--for three whole years (which shows you how much of a juvenile dissident I was.)

It's not that I didn't enjoy school. I loved elementary school and some of my greatest achievements included being editor of the class newspaper, "Head Boy" of my class--and captain of the safety patrol (all very prestigious positions). Here I was, this quiet and slight kid, bespectacled with thick, black frames; but in Chinese School, I was an insurgent rebelling against my parents and anything too Chinafied for me to take in.

On my first day of Chinese School, I was placed in the beginners' class for small children and older kids who could not cough up anything Chinese in their speech. I was one of the latter. Being put in a class comprised mainly of cute, talkative six year-olds is no fun for a brash twelve year-old who thinks he is mature for his age. Unfortunately, my other friends were in different classes, either because they started Chinese school at an earlier age or were immediately placed in more advanced classes upon enrolling.

The only kid in my class who was close to my age was Eddie, a mentally bankrupt but otherwise nice kid. We would skip out together by going to a nearby shopping centre or hiding out in the "forest", an undeveloped lot next to the church. There we traded hockey cards and read comic books. I skipped out a lot, a practice which later prepared me for high school and university.



- Daniel C. Lee

Our teacher, Mrs. Tsang, was a stern Chinese woman who had compelling features--dark, stained teeth; black, crumbling fingernails (which I had concluded were burnt regularly by matches)--and breath that was beyond description. Rice breath, I think we called it. We always wondered if she had a bowl of rice every recess period before she breathed all over us kids.

Recess was formerly announced by the ringing of a brass bell. The biggest honour for any teacher's pet is be given the bell. The rest of us would be playing floor hockey, flipping cards against the wall, or what was even more fun, terrorizing little kids. Spitballs, rubber bands and red bean trajectories were the order of the day and we got one teacher's pet by yanking on her tightly secured ponytail any chance we could get. I remember, though, being afraid that one more time and her eyes would bug out like goldfish.

Cheating is a word synonymous with Chinese School--and most of my time was spent chiselling the characters from the to-be-memorized passages into the wooden board which served as desks and great sources of information. Other cheating schemes included retracing characters with

ink over your lightly pencilled marks made the night before, or scribbling in your test-book during the exam and later handing in another book with your lesson already nicely printed out. Eddie, who was so original, wrote his lesson out in invisible ink. But when the time came to write the passage out by memory, he discovered that the developing part of his pen had dried out. "Life is tough on Eddie," I sighed with all the wisdom of a 12 year-old, "especially if he's stupid."

The worst part of Chinese School was the end of class, when we lined up in pairs in front of the door. Just before leaving we were coerced into singing some ditty extolling the virtues of studying hard and being good to your parents, teachers and classmates. When the rest of the class, who were faithfully chirping out the song, came to the ending, Eddie and I would shout out the last line (which

was the only one I could remember), "Joy geen Seen Saang, joy geen TEUNG HOK !!!" ("Good-bye, teacher; good-bye, fellow classmates.") Then we'd all run out as if we were being freed from the Gulag Archipelago. But many times we tried to sneak out to avoid this great social embarrassment. After all, the other classes didn't have to sing it. They would head out the door smirking at us. It was worse, though, if you were caught leaving without singing your good-byes to the teacher and classmates. Being pulled back in by your ear is simply not good form, especially if you happen to be twice the age of your classmates.

My illustrious career came to an end after a mutual decision made by my parents: "We spent all that money on you and you still can't speak or write a word of Chinese, Nyah, nyah, nyah....."

They said I'd grow up regretting not learning the language--and it's true, I do.

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A MINORITY WITHIN A MINORITY: the elderly South Asians in Toronto

SURINDER SINGH GILL

*Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be....*

Many stereotyped ideas characterize much of our thinking about people over 65 and their problems. Being labelled a "senior citizen" constitutes a threat to the self image of most of these older adults, and often leads to feelings of confusion, unproductiveness, isolation and depression. The designation, "senior citizen", has come into wide use in most communities. As such, social service agencies and community organizations have never really thought about the psychological effects of using this particular term. Although it is a euphemism that attempts to connote status and respect --like the word "elder" in some primitive societies--"senior citizen" is not a label that is popular or acceptable to those who are forced to wear it. Separation from the rest of society by a special definition is psychologically unhealthy for any group. Therefore, we should try to change our attitudes and attempt to use such alternatives as "older adults" and "aging", which are more acceptable to them. Old age is a relative matter, depending on many personal and environmental factors, as well as various physical, psychological and social variables.

This paper discusses the experience of older people of East Indian origin in Canada in relation to the family system--and society. I believe it is important to outline the background of the Indian family system, religion, customs, marriage patterns and history--along with current problems in adapting to the North American society.

India itself is a multi-racial, multilingual subcontinent where fourteen languages are spoken. The majority of those who emigrated left the Northwest or South of India for Canada, the U.S., Europe and Africa. Canada's first group of East Indian immigrants arrived in Vancouver around 1895. And in 1925 the first East Indian stepped foot in Toronto. Since that time a few students came to Toronto for higher educa-

tion and some of them settled here. But the greatest influx of Indians came around 1971-72. Today people of East Indian origin are scattered from Vancouver to St. John's, with 100,000 in the Metro Toronto area alone. The majority of Toronto's East Indians are "Punjabi speaking"--and about 35,000 of these are *sikhs*.

The Indian family is based on an extended family system, which originated in *Vedic* times. Such families usually consist of a group of three or more generations with a complex set of mutual obligations. They pool their money so that expenditures are made from a common purse. The oldest male member is absolute head of the family. They keep property in common and participate in family worship. Rights and duties, sentiments and authority constitute the elements of family unity. Thus individuality is subordinate to collective solidarity. The extended family therefore plays an important role in the lives of all its members. Culturally, the father is accepted as a dictator and the family try to keep him happy. The mother acts as a mediator between children and the father and, consequently, sons and daughters often have greater affection for their mothers.

The children depend on her even after they have grown up. For example, children may return home after the death of a spouse and become dependent on the mother for the care of their own children while they go to work. The mother's role is also central to solving the major problems of the family. The joint family system therefore encourages deep, understanding relationships between mothers, sons and daughters.

Elderly South Asians, after enjoying such high status in the nuclear family, find a different kind of family atmosphere in Canadian society. Ever since the beginning of mass migration of peoples, there has been potential pain, anger, misunderstanding and frustration as a result. One wonders whether the needs of these "older people" are being adequately met in this rapidly changing society. Are they accepted by other Canadians? Have disproportionate numbers

of them succumbed to mental illness? How have they withstood the experience of being transplanted? How do they put up with harrassment and taunts such as "Paki", "Rag Head", "Have you got a headache" -- or "Why have you come here, dirty people"?

A recent study by Geoffrey C. Godhey, Pennsylvania State University professor of Recreation and Parks, shows that "elderly people living in American cities are so afraid of teenagers, many of them remain indoors after 3:00 p.m." He also found that the fear of crime keeps many of the elderly away from senior citizens' centres, parks and other places where they would normally go. Most of them have been robbed and their homes burglarized. "There is a tendency to think old people are unreasonable in their fear; that they curtail activities when there is no need to do so. But we see a high correlation between fear and victimization."

I believe the study compiled by Professor Godhey might have been dealing with elderly people who look the same, live in the same environments throughout their lives, have interpersonal relationships with other elderly people and neighbours and know who to approach in case of emergencies. I wonder what happens to elderly South Asians in Canada who do not know much English, do not resemble the white majority, do not understand Canadian cultural programs or social services--and do not have any place to spend their leisure time. Their years are usually fraught with anxiety and insecurity. The chances are that they came from a country where joint family systems and the State look after them during illnesses and shortages of money.

In Canada, the East Indian son realizes that such a system would not attend to all his own needs. The greatest struggle is for what sociologists call "Vertical Adjustment". In other words, they seek a place in society of comparable level to that which they enjoyed in their native land. "He lies awake nights, wrestling with nightmarish questions--what will happen to me if my family, as well as Canadian society does not accept me?". The North American influence has encouraged South Asians to adapt to a nuclear family system in which children want to live their own lives without parental pressure.

Problems of family life frequently result in symptoms of physical illness, lonelienss and mental stress for elderly South Asians. According to information provided by community organizations, leaders and religious centres, approximately 2,000 South Asian people 65 or over are living in Metro Toronto. The Sponsorship Program for parents of any age would result in a flow of more older people to Canadian soil in the eighties. There are

no special programs arranged by the Ministry of Culture and Recreation, New Horizons or the South Asian organizations because these people are not considered by the government as an important part of the Canadian cultural system.

During my work on this paper, I openly talked with parents, sons, daughters and grandchildren to find out about the social and economic strains on their family systems. 'Senior citizens' are the main victims of such problems and they are caught between two cultures. They have no place to go during the day. Thus most of them spend their time within the walls of the family apartment, eventually ending up severely depressed. Sometimes I try to understand the status and dignity which these individuals enjoyed in their own countries. I also ask community leaders why we allow the elderly to be pushed into situations which meet the needs and interests of the sponsors--i.e. the need to save money by depending on retired parents for baby sitting; and the need to save time and energy by depending on them to do housework and guard against burglars. The elderly person's presence in the sponsor's home might even fill a need for companionship; but usually the sponsor is not very understanding of his parents' particular problems and feelings.

The question arises as to why these older East Indians are allowed to suffer--and who or what is responsible: South Asian community organizations? The federal government (Secretary of State, Employment and Immigration)? Economic conditions? Children who sponsor their parents? Frustrations, culture, religion? Senior Citizen Advisory Council? Or, perhaps the 'senior citizens' themselves?

The following case studies focus on some Punjabi-speaking elderly people who are enduring hard times without any support. Although I came across 50 such cases during my field work, such cases are, in fact, few and hard to find, as most people do not want to disclose family problems to others.

CASE NO. 1

Mr. A., a widower, age 65, was sponsored by his daughter in 1975. The sponsors have lived in Canada for the last ten years and have been very influenced by North American values and customs. The family thought him a burden after a few months and persuaded Mr. A. to go to work. The new environment, new language and family crises developed into a conflict, resulting in his having to leave home. He approached the Sikh Temple and received some temporary accommodation along with money and clothes. Mr. A. was eventually exploited by a shrewd businessman, and, as a result, he required mental health care.



CASE NO. 4

Mr. D., recently married, sponsored his parents: father (61) and mother (60), along with a 20 year old sister, in 1979. Mr. D.'s wife was not in favour of sponsoring her husband's parents, as they themselves had only arrived in 1975. Mr. D. welcomed the prospect of a family reunion. But his wife feared the loss of her freedom and social life. The parents, who had lived in a village all their lives, were not happy to discover their daughter-in-law's liberal attitudes and behaviours. Conflict soon arose and the family divided into two camps. The young Mrs. D. gave her husband an ultimatum: either she or her mother-in-law would remain in the house. Finally she won, forcing her mother-in-law, father-in-law and sister-in-law to seek shelter in a temple--and then in a rented room. The 20 year old sister found a job; however, the aging parents could not cope with the situation and ended up in a psychiatric hospital.

CASE NO. 2

Mr. B. sponsored his father (67), mother (59), sister (18) and brother (19) as landed immigrants in 1977. Mr. B. has his own home, a very good job and is financially well-off. His father, a retired government officer, expected to be considered head of the family. He made demands on his children and could not understand why the old traditions were not maintained here. Differences of opinion created arguments. The father and daughter left the home and approached a Hindu Temple for help. The daughter ended up working and the father suffered a heart attack. There was no money, no permanent home--and no relatives. He couldn't go back to his country; he remained physically ill.

CASE NO.5

Mr. E., sponsored his parents, aged 62 and 60, a brother (19) and sister (20). The family was raised with strict religious beliefs and customs. They rose early in the morning, bathed, prayed and then went to work. Mr. E., the sponsor, had been in Canada for several years, was financially well-off--and was not religious. He found it difficult to tolerate the early morning rituals of his parents and a conflict grew between him and his father, forcing the older Mr. E. to leave his son's home, along with his daughter. This split in the family drove the 19 year old to alcoholism and he too abandoned his father. The daughter got married and the father was left alone and penniless. This man is psychologically and physically isolated from his family--and from society. He has no permanent address and is currently under psychiatric care.

CASE NO. 3

Mr. C., married with one child, sponsored his parents (father - 61 and mother -59) in 1978. Mr. C., along with his wife, went to the airport to receive his parents. Mr. C's wife forgot to touch her mother-in-law's feet to receive her blessings at the time of their meeting--a very important Indian tradition. A few months later, the mother-in-law was still obsessed with this apparent lack of respect, as she became quite hostile towards her daughter-in-law and even stopped looking after the baby when the young couple were at work. The tension mounted with Mr. C. caught in the middle between his parents and his wife. Eventually, Mr. C's parents ended up in a one-room apartment. The community raised some temporary funds to help the older couple, but the older Mr. C. was forced to go to work. Under such emotional and economic stress, both husband and wife suffered a great deal of mental and physical illness.

The selected case histories exemplify some typical problems:

- 1) The daughter influenced by North American society and dominating parents;
- 2) The father bringing his old value system to Canada and expecting to influence and dominate the son's family;
- 3) The mother-in-law, as usual, shows her authority, demands too much from the family, and develops conflicts within it;

4) The daughter-in-law does not want to lose her freedom, with the arrival of her in-laws; feeling trapped, she threatens to leave home and her husband is caught in the middle;

5) The son does not like the old religious rituals, wants his parents to adopt his lifestyle, and thus forces his father to leave and fend for himself.

The above Toronto case studies, along with Professor Godhey's report, show how the elderly are suffering in this supposedly highly-civilized society. Frequently, at meetings and in informal discussions on the subject, people argue that Canadian and American elderly citizens are suffering too, and that elderly South Asians should not be treated any differently. I disagree with the notion that all should suffer just because others have had to suffer. Is it not possible to develop goals towards caring, understanding and social-recreational and educational programs?

We could begin by providing outreach programs through the school systems, or in conjunction with teenagers, so that the young can see for themselves how they may be one day. In addition, we should be putting pressure on our political leaders to increase community relations/development programs which are relevant to all age groups. My purpose in writing this report is to develop an awareness among South Asian community organizations and leaders, as well as government departments, as to how the South Asian elderly people are suffering, and how this can lead to serious mental health problems. At present, no one cares about them because they are not counted among other elderly people in Canada and do not cost the community or the government very much. Now is therefore the time to start thinking about their problems and formulate practical solutions. Information and community aid programs could be developed by South Asian workers at minimum expense. Such preventative care could significantly reduce the number of hospitalizations for psychiatric treatment, and make retirement in Canada a much more desirable prospect.

The subject needs more research, but the following are a few recommendations which I would like to put forward:

1. Train South Asian community workers
2. Persuade South Asian community organizations to assist government agencies in carrying out constructive programs.
3. Orientation programs must be instituted by New Horizons.
4. Social links must be established with inside and outside community systems.
5. The elderly should be encouraged to improve their quality of life and lead meaningful existences in Canadian society.

6. Special courses should be developed to promote self-confidence and awareness of community services.
7. Selected elderly persons should be introduced to major institutions, organizations, schools and community centres to share their experiences.
8. Develop small scale industry to make use of their skills, and thereby improve their self-confidence and family relationships.
9. Community centres should be made available to them where they can meet, hold ceremonies and provide a focal point for intercultural communications.
10. Establish information centres specifically for the elderly.
11. Persuade the elderly to visit family doctors for regular check-ups.
12. Training, information and recreational programs should be controlled by government agencies, as local South Asian organizations might come into conflict with each other.

While emphasizing that government agencies should take more responsibility for the needs of these South Asian seniors, it should also be remembered that "senior citizens" themselves constitute a large community who have much to offer in terms of facilitating the integration of their members into both minority and majority cultures. They have an indispensable role to play in the diagnosis of needs and the development of many social and cultural policies.

The issues raised in this report should be handled sensitively because if they are not, they will lead to strains in relationships both within families and the community--and between the South Asian community and the rest of Canadian society. Because of the nature of these issues, what is required is strong South Asian (East Indian) and government support for social, economical and recreational programs which will assist the South Asian seniors in diagnosing and meeting their own needs--in a phrase: "self-help". The professionals should not turn away from the new problems of these people, but they should ensure that the remaining years of aging men and women are spent fruitfully and with dignity.

Author's footnote: Finally I am thankful and indebted to Ms. Pat Kensella, a lecturer at George Brown College of Technology in Toronto, for the Activity Director's course for Senior Citizens, who persuaded and guided me. Without her encouragement and guidance, this report could not have been written.

Review

by
Himani Bannerji



STILL CLOSE TO THE ISLAND by Cyril Dabydeen,
(Ottawa: Commoner's Publishing, 1980), 111 pp.

*Freedom. It isn't once to walk out/
under the Milky Way, feeling the
rivers/of light, the fields of dark/
freedom is daily, prose-bound,
routine/ remembering. Putting
together, inch by inch/the starry
worlds. From all the lost collec-
tions.*

- Adrienne Rich

Cyril Dabydeen was born in Guyana and came to Canada in 1970. This little piece of information tells us a lot about how to look at his recent book of short stories--*Still Close to the Island*. It is a book of the immigrant--especially from the Third World--and his journey from rags to rags. The immigrant's dream of a better life took him far away from his island home, and yet not far enough, for he can still hear the sound of his mother pounding fruits in the heart beat of his unborn child ("still close to the island"). In the isolation of their bush camps the seasonal workers lie in the dark dreaming of the old faces. In the derelict rooming houses of downtown Toronto they dredge up moments of lost loves, fellowships and laughter. The 'Now' that we live in is always rounded off by the encircling 'Then'. In story after story--"Mammita's Garden Cove", "A Car is Just Like an Eating Baby", "Vampire Life"--to name just a few, we see the past of Dabydeen undergoing a sea-change into art.

Nothing heroic or momentous ever happens in Dabydeen's stories. He is not interested in the extraordinary. Neither unusual people nor incidents are featured in his stories. The characters in his stories are not conscious and critical actors, but people doing their living within boundaries imposed on them by nature or those in power. Those in power almost never enter into the stories directly, but they are discernable in the effects that they have in the lives of others. With suggestive and economic strokes of his pen (the stories are often very short), and often with the help of symbolism (Dabydeen's major work is in poetry), Dabydeen makes transparent little windows out of seemingly trivial experiences and offers us glimpses of the seething, complex life underneath. In "Antics of

the Insane", we have a pretty lethal use of this device, where through the most insignificant details he builds up the slow but sure mental disintegration of his aunt and uncle. In the story "Memphis", about "the cat" as "black as the pitch from the pitch-lake in La Brea, Trinidad", we see racism in action through a comically depicted scene in which a white man unleashes an Alsatian dog and shouts, "I'll teach you to stay out of here! We'll keep this city clean". Here Dabydeen manages to build into the modern day Canada the undertone of slavery days.

Dabydeen's preoccupations are with his past, his immediate family and the people whom he knew--and the present, in terms of the immigrant's 'Canadian experience'. In the latter his scope is wide, including the experiences of Latin Americans, West Indian peoples--and even Polish and Czechoslovakian immigrants.

As regards the stylistic aspects of these stories, the ones that come off the best are the ones that are told in straight narratives with a lot of dialogue which often retains the accents and rhythms of the actual spoken language. The stories that are more symbolist in their structures are less successful attempts in that they are very shadowy and lack substance. In one or two of them, especially in the one entitled "A Car is Just Like Eating a Baby!", the combination of the two styles has produced a jarring and unauthentic tone which is in stark contrast to stories such as "Bitter Blood", one of the best in the volume. But these are probably problems resulting from the transition that the writer is making from poetry as his main medium to short stories, in which he has to find a true voice.

Finally, I would like to discuss a major problem which I have with Dabydeen's stories--a problem which, ironically enough, arises from the very excellence of some of them. I find his consistent and perpetual stance of the detached observer rather hard to take at times. This can of course make the piece come out uncluttered and clean, but one often asks questions about the author's own personal stand. Politically, I mean. It is not that one is dying for a glimpse of the author's emotional guts, because the writer is often very good at depicting the general texture of lives of the poor and so often handles themes that touch the hidden springs of power. One, again, does not seek party lines and answers, but simply for some response which is more than nostalgia or sympathy, i.e. anger. After showing what he does, why so little anger, why no questions about change?

To this question one might reply what use is anger. Life must be endured here or anywhere else. And this is the message I get from this volume, which upon reflec-

tion seems to be a political stance as well. Grim, grinding experiences cannot find their only resolution in accurate depiction and sympathy. The people in his stories are depicted as entirely passive and powerless beings, and all experiences are primarily personal. In fact, in the only story where a character does show a political facet, Dabydeen cuts him down with the fact that he is a despicable man who is double crossing his wife. The hypocrisy which this character displays makes his politics hollow. Now, while it may be true that many labour leaders are sexist and racist pigs, these elements form no integral part of their

political work. They are this way not because they are caught up in their union work, but in spite of it. The fact that the man was concerned with minority rights, in my opinion, did not deserve to be trivialized in this way. After all, is a consistently reactionary conduct better than a contradictory and confused leftist one? I would choose the latter. There is still room for hope.

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